

AFRICA RECOVERY

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Secretary-General launches a "quiet revolution"

UN reform plan will provide new impetus to development

By Margaret A. Novicki

The "most extensive and far-reaching" reforms in the United Nations' 52-year history, unveiled by Secretary-General Kofi Annan on 16 July, will have a significant impact on Africa's economic and social development. The package of reforms, characterized by the Secretary-General as a "quiet revolution" in the way the UN does business, will shift resources out of administration to development, mobilize new sources of development financing, and strengthen UN operations in the field. They will also improve the organization's ability to address the challenges Africa faces arising out of conflict and its aftermath – from humanitarian aid to peace-building and human rights.

"The reforms that I propose today will enable the United Nations to do even more, even better," Secretary-General Annan stated before the General Assembly. The aim of the process, he said, is to bring to the UN "greater

unity of purpose, greater coherence of efforts and greater agility in responding to an increasingly dynamic and complex world."

The restructuring meets Africa's priorities and concerns in two significant ways – strengthening and streamlining the development activities of the UN, and enhancing its capacity to build peace, respond to humanitarian needs, and support human rights. Speaking on behalf of the African Group, Ambassador Jack Wilmot of Ghana said for



Secretary-General Kofi Annan answers journalists' questions on his proposals to reform the UN, presented to the General Assembly on 16 July.

Industrialized countries spotlight Africa

Summit of G-7 and Russia promises greater market access

By Ernest Harsch

For the first time in its history, the Group of Seven (G-7) industrialized countries devoted extensive discussion to broad African development concerns at their annual summit meeting. In order to develop, African economies especially need more private investment and expanded access to world markets, declared the Summit of the Eight (the G-7 plus Russia), held 20-22 June in Denver, Colorado. "Our objective is not only to facilitate the progressive integration of African countries into the world economy," said the final communiqué, "but also to foster the integration of poor populations into the economic, social and political

life of their countries."

Observing that external aid alone cannot help African countries develop, the communiqué stressed, "Increased prosperity ultimately depends upon creating an environment for domestic capital formation, private sector-led growth and successful integration into global markets." It praised the increasing number of African countries that are adopting market-oriented policies, while also undertaking democratic reforms, reducing military expenditures and strengthening public institutions and civil society.

those in developing countries, particularly in Africa, "the yardstick" for evaluating the reform proposals will be the extent to which their aspirations for a more secure, prosperous and just world are satisfied.

The Secretary-General's recommendations – the result of a six-month study – are contained in the report, "Renewing the United Nations: A Programme of Reform." They are the second phase of a reform effort begun shortly after Mr. Annan took office in January. Some proposals require General Assembly approval, while others can be implemented immediately under the Secretary-General's own authority.

To accurately reflect the "changing global agenda" which involves "new and unprecedented threats and challenges" – many transcending national borders – Mr. Annan announced that the work of the organization has been restructured around five core areas to which resources will be reoriented: peace and

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Annan asserts primacy of human rights

'Human rights are African rights, not an imposition or plot by the industrialized West'

By **Salim Lone**

In a series of decisive statements and actions in June, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan emphatically identified respect for human rights as a key priority for all states, one which is indivisible from the universally accepted goals of democracy and sustainable development. In enunciating this position on human rights—one of the most contentious issues in international diplomacy—the Secretary-General added significantly to the authority with which champions of this cause can press their case, particularly within Africa, where genocide in Rwanda and virulent internal strife in Burundi, Liberia and Somalia have made protecting human rights and instituting democratic rule a compelling priority.

Mr. Annan chose the setting of the June summit of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in Harare, Zimbabwe, for the most explicit rendering of his emerging vision of how the principles of the UN Charter should be embodied in national and international policy-making. "We will succeed," he said on 2 June, "to the extent that we embrace the inviolability of human rights" alongside "the primacy of democratic rule and the imperative of sustainable development."

He pressed his case further on three important occasions in the days that followed: in his first meeting with President Laurent Desiré Kabila of the Democratic Republic of the Congo; in his 4 June comments in London on the coup d'état in Sierra Leone; and in his 12 June appointment as UN Human Rights Commissioner of Mrs. Mary Robinson, the President of Ireland and an outspoken advocate of human rights.

Addressing in Harare the African Heads of State whose support had been instrumental in electing him Secretary-General, Mr. Annan made an impassioned plea for placing human rights at the centre of any programme designed to promote democracy and sustainable development. He said he found "truly demeaning" the assertions of those who think human rights concerns are "a luxury of the rich countries for which Africa is not ready," while others "treat it as an imposition, if not a



By Mike Grant

plot, by the industrialized West."

"Do not African mothers weep when their sons or daughters are killed or maimed by agents of repressive rule?" he asked African leaders. Among them were President Pasteur Bizimungu of Rwanda, where a rebel force had put an end to the genocide perpetrated by Hutu extremists, and President Kabila, whose rebel army has been accused, during its military campaign against the Mobutu regime, of perpetrating atrocities against Rwandese refugees who included the Hutu extremists allied with the Mobutu regime.

The Secretary-General left no doubt about the answer. "I say this to you, my brothers and sisters: human rights are African rights, and I call upon you to ensure that all Africans are able fully to enjoy them."

In making the link between sustainable development, democracy and human rights, Mr. Annan emphasized Africa's need for external assistance. But he also made a powerful appeal for Africans to take full charge of their own destiny as they try to build peace through a more just society. "In the final analysis," he said, "what stands between us and the future is ourselves."

Then, in his 3 June meeting with President Kabila, the first issue the Secretary-General raised was the humanitarian situation of Rwandese refugees. In that regard, Mr. Annan



Focus on human rights: Mr. Annan with President Kabila (far left) and OAU Secretary-General Salim Lone; and above, new Human Rights Commissioner Mary Robinson.

obtained the President's agreement to grant access to the eastern part of the country for the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to investigate reports of gross violations of human rights. When the Congolese authorities subsequently raised objections to the initial composition of the investigating team, Mr. Annan vowed to quickly appoint a new team and send it into the field. "What is important here is to get to the facts," he said (see page 19).

Mr. Annan stopped over in London on his return from the OAU Summit, and in a joint press conference with Mr. Robin Cook, the UK Foreign Secretary, stated in remarkably strong terms that the coup in Sierra Leone was unacceptable. Pointing to the OAU condemnation of the coup and the stand taken by Sierra Leone's neighbours, Mr. Annan hinted that he might not be unsympathetic to the use of force by these neighbours to restore the democratically elected government: "It may have to come to that," he said, although naturally "I would prefer negotiations."

A week later, on 12 June, Mr. Annan announced what he said was "one of the most important appointments I will probably have the opportunity to make during my term. [one that] is very important for the entire international community." This was the appointment of Irish President Mary Robinson as the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights. She is "an extraordinary leader...who will bring dynamism, credibility and leadership...for the

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The Secretary-General's emerging vision on translating the principles of the UN Charter into policy.

A new era beckons Africa, says Annan

Africa needs and deserves aid, but "what stands between us and the future is ourselves"

Following are excerpts from the address given on 2 June 1997 by Secretary-General Kofi Annan to the Annual Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in Harare:

Africa has, in the past five decades, been through a series of momentous changes. First came decolonization and the struggle against apartheid. Then came a second wave, too often marked by civil wars, the tyranny of military rule, and economic stagnation. I believe that a new era is now in prospect. Africa's third wave. Let us make this third wave one of lasting peace, based on democracy, human rights, and sustainable development.

Portents of this third wave are all around us. We salute the democratic transitions in Namibia, in Mozambique, and, most recently, in South Africa. In the Congo, we have seen a sudden shift in power. A long period of despotic rule has been brought to an end. A truly historic opportunity beckons. The entire world was relieved to see the transition take place in relative peace, and all welcome President Kabila's commitment to constitutional rule and to the holding of democratic elections.

It is necessary even now that the protection of human life and full respect for human rights are given the highest priority, and that the rule of law should quickly return to that vast and vibrant country. The United Nations asks that we may tend to the weak and the displaced, so that this new beginning may be an affirmation of the sanctity of life.

My friends, I speak to you as a fellow African, and I speak to you from the heart: we will succeed to the extent that we embrace the primacy of democratic rule, the inviolability of human rights, and the imperatives of sustainable development.

The success of the third wave begins with a single and simple proposition — the will of the people. The will of the people must be the basis of governmental authority in Africa, and governments, duly elected, should not be overthrown by force. Last week, military elements in Sierra Leone toppled a democratically elected government. The Secretary-General of the OAU, the Government of Zimbabwe and other African leaders spoke for all of us when they expressed their revulsion.

Africa can no longer tolerate, and accept as *faits accomplis*, coups against elected governments, and the illegal seizure of power by military

cliques, who sometimes act for sectional interests, sometimes simply for their own. Armies exist to protect national sovereignty, not to train their guns on their own people.

Some may argue that military regimes bring stability and predictability, that they are helpful to economic development. That is a delusion. Look at the example of South America, where the militaries are back in their garrisons, democracy thrives, and economies soar. Accordingly, let us dedicate ourselves to a new doctrine for African politics: where democracy has been usurped, let us do whatever is in our power to restore it to its rightful owners, the people.

The success of Africa's third wave depends equally on respect for fundamental human rights. The conflicts which have disfigured our continent have, all too often, been accompanied by massive human rights violations.

I am aware of the fact that some view this concern as a luxury of the rich countries for which Africa is not ready. I know that others treat it as an

imposition, if not a plot, by the industrialized West.

I find these thoughts truly demeaning, demeaning of the yearning for human dignity that resides in every African heart. Do not African mothers weep when their sons or daughters are killed or maimed by agents of repressive rule? We cannot afford to lose one life, spare one idea, relinquish one hope, if we are to succeed on our chosen course. So I say this to you, my brothers and sisters, that human rights are African rights, and I call upon you to ensure that all Africans are able fully to enjoy them.

My friends, the promise of Africa's third wave beckons. Our turn has come. We can eradicate poverty, settle our scattered people, restore hope, and achieve dynamism. Africa needs external assistance, and Africa deserves it; but in the final analysis, what stands between us and the future is ourselves. ■

The complete text of this speech can be requested by facsimile (212) 963-4556 or downloaded from the UN Africa Recovery webpage: www.un.org/cecosider/geninfo/afrec/

Human rights

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UN in the human rights field," the Secretary-General said.

Mr. Annan's stance reflects the growing strength of forces, including in developing countries, pressing for human rights.

The appointment was a bold one: Mrs. Robinson's outspoken and activist approach has won her a wide following. A lawyer by training, she has served on the International Commission of Jurists and has special expertise in human rights law. As President of Ireland she emphasized the needs of developing countries, becoming the first and virtually only head of state to visit Somalia following the crisis there in 1992 and Rwanda after the 1994 genocide. But there is also a worry among some member states that her outspoken approach may be inappropriate for a UN official, given the lack of universal consensus on what constitute the core elements of human rights.

Mr. Annan's explicit elaboration of his position on human rights in his speech to the OAU

is all the more forceful — and credible — for the fact that he himself is African: a non-African Secretary-General could not have spoken in this manner without causing offence. The boldness of his stance on democracy and human rights — which are increasingly being seen as vital components of the criteria for defining legitimacy for governments — will make it much easier for Africa's democrats to campaign in national and global forums for humane and democratic rule.

Bold as the Secretary-General's stance on human rights is, it also reflects the growing strength of forces, including within the developing world, which see respect for human rights as a cornerstone of good governance.

The Secretary-General's package of UN reforms, announced on 16 July, also heightens the prominence of human rights concerns within the organization. Human rights has been designated one of the five core areas around which the UN's work will be restructured. The two human rights offices will be consolidated and a single secretariat established to provide the new Commissioner with a strong institutional basis for putting human rights at the heart of the policy-making process. ■

Coups no longer acceptable: OAU

Summit extols democracy; African Economic Community is inaugurated

By **Andrew Meldrum**

Harare

Thirty African heads of state gathered in Harare on 2 June for the 33rd summit of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) intending to welcome the progress towards achieving peace in such troubled countries as Liberia, Angola and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (formerly Zaire).

will find it more difficult to get recognition from us. Democracy is getting stronger in Africa and we now have a definite attitude against coups."

The OAU authorized the countries of the Economic Community of West Africa States (ECOWAS) to pursue their campaign against the military action in Sierra Leone.

Events in Sierra Leone may have stolen the

fully-fledged continent-wide economic union. The heads of state temporarily reconvened as the Community's inaugural summit.

Nigerian Foreign Minister Tom Ikimi said that in this era of rapid globalization, individual African countries with small markets cannot afford to continue to stand on their own. "Africa's economic integration needs to be speeded up," he said. "The European Union, the North American Free Trade Agreement and the Association of South-East Asian Nations are all striding ahead. If Africa wishes to be part of a better world, we must also group together or risk becoming simple markets for these fast-developing groups. If we continue as we are, our future will be as humiliating as our present is distressing."

While some leaders stressed the need for African countries to follow the bitter economic medicine of structural adjustment programmes, President Mugabe criticized the policies of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

He urged African leaders to "resist the recolonization of our countries under the guise of programmes aimed at safeguarding the environment. The entire developing world is facing hostile policies from the World Trade Organization and international financial institutions. It would appear there is a coordinated political agenda by the North which controls these institutions aimed at suppressing the development of developing countries."

When it resumed business as the OAU summit, African leaders reelected Mr. Salim Ahmed Salim of Tanzania to a third term as OAU Secretary-General. Mr. Salim stood unopposed after the only other candidate, Foreign Minister Amara Essy of Côte d'Ivoire, withdrew.

South Africa was a leader at the summit in pressing for passage of a treaty to ban anti-personnel landmines from the entire continent. The treaty calls for a total ban on the manufacture, sale, transport and use of all anti-personnel mines. "We want to see anti-personnel landmines banished from our continent, banished from the entire world," said Mr. Mugabe.



OAU Chairman and Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe led the rousing welcome given to the new Congolese President, Laurent Desire Kabila.

But even as the leaders were taking their seats at the summit that morning, Sierra Leone's capital, Freetown, was being bombarded by Nigerian ships. Although it had not been on the agenda, the thorny question of the coup in Sierra Leone and the action taken against the coup makers by the Nigerian forces overshadowed all other issues at the Harare summit.

"Where democracy has been usurped, let us do all in our power to restore it to the people," said UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan at the summit's opening. "Neighbouring states, regional groups and international organizations must all play their parts to restore Sierra Leone's constitutional and democratic government."

'Democracy must be restored'

Similar sentiments were voiced by Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe. "Democracy must be restored in Sierra Leone as a matter of urgency," said Mr. Mugabe, the new OAU chairman.

"We are getting tougher and tougher on coups," said Mr. Mugabe. "Coups-plotters and those who overthrow democratic governments

thunder from other issues at the OAU summit opening, but Africa's leaders did give a rousing welcome to Congolese President Laurent Desire Kabila, their newest colleague.

"A long period of despotic rule has been brought to an end with the toppling of the Mobutu regime," said the UN Secretary-General. "We all welcome Laurent Kabila and his commitment to establish constitutional rule and democracy in that country."

Perhaps the most stirring moment of the summit opening was Mr. Annan's call for Africa to maintain the highest standards of human rights (see page 4).

"Human rights are African rights," declared Mr. Annan unequivocally. "I call upon you to ensure that all Africans are able to enjoy them. When we succeed at that Africa will have taken a great step forward."

Economic integration

The second day of the summit was dedicated to the inauguration of the African Economic Community, which aims gradually to become a

Denver summit

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The summit also implicitly acknowledged that high tariffs and other trade barriers in the industrialized countries impede African efforts to boost export earnings. "Access to our markets is a crucial tool for fostering economic growth in sub-Saharan Africa," the summit participants declared. "We each will continue to improve, through various means, access to our markets for African exports."

Debate over aid

In key respects, the summit's "Partnership for Development" with Africa echoed a US initiative designed to enhance private investment and trade links between Africa and the US (see box below, and next page). Unlike the US initiative, which focuses largely on trade and investment and touches only marginally on aid, the summit communiqué stated: "Substantial flows of official development assistance will continue to play an essential role in building the capacity of sub-Saharan African countries to achieve their sustainable development objectives."

During the summit discussions, several of the European heads of state similarly cited the importance of aid. Mr. Tony Blair, Prime Minister of the UK, announced that over the next three years his government would increase by 50 per cent support for primary education, basic health care and clean water in sub-Saharan Africa.

Several also noted their long-standing aid

investment and trade programmes in Africa. French President Jacques Chirac said he was glad the US government was finally thinking about the continent, while German Chancellor Helmut Kohl said he welcomed "America's discovery of Africa."

At a news conference, in response to a reporter's question about the "one-sided emphasis on trade and investment" in the US initiative, US Treasury Secretary Robert Rubin clarified that "the object was not to in any way reduce aid," but to target it more toward countries undertaking market-oriented reform. Mr. Daniel Tarullo, President Clinton's national economic policy adviser, added that "the formula was trade plus aid plus reform."

With insecurity and conflict such serious impediments to development in Africa, the summit participants also applauded the growing efforts in the continent, especially by the Organization of African Unity (OAU), to develop local capacities for conflict prevention, peacekeeping and post-conflict reconciliation and recovery. In support of such efforts, they encouraged the UN Secretary-General, as part of his reform proposals, "to identify ways the international community can further strengthen Africa's initiatives."

Reflecting concern that the summit's agenda might be regarded by some as yet another external imposition on the continent, the summit promised to "deepen the dialogue with African

partners, work for greater local ownership of development strategies and encourage the participation of non-governmental actors."

During the summit, however, leaders of the US Congressional Black Caucus, religious groups and other non-governmental Africa advocacy organizations issued a statement criticizing the summit participants for failing to invite any African leaders to be present in Denver. "Policymakers must consult with representatives of African civil society organizations and grassroots movements before deciding how they can most effectively promote economic development," declared Mr. David Beckman, President of Bread for the World, one of the signers of the statement.

High tariffs and other trade barriers in the industrialized countries impede African efforts to boost export earnings.

Russia to join debt relief efforts

In addition to supporting implementation of the Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative (see page 14), the Denver summit marked an important opening toward debt relief on developing countries' obligations to Russia.

The G-7 recommended that Russia be admitted to membership in the Paris Club of official bilateral creditors, a move that will need to be approved by the full Paris Club, possibly later this year. As a basis for entry into the Paris Club, Russia has agreed to reduce its claims on developing country debt owed to the former Soviet Union. In 1994, according to official Russian sources, sub-Saharan countries owed Russia \$14.3 bn and North African countries owed another \$10.7 bn. The UN Conference on Trade and Development suggests that Russian claims on sub-Saharan Africa in 1994 were about \$16.8 bn.

The adjustments on Russian claims, combined with prevailing Paris Club debt-relief arrangements, may lead to a reduction of up to 90 per cent in the debt owed to Russia by heavily indebted poor countries in Africa, according to initial estimates. This would mark a particularly important development for Angola, Ethiopia, Guinea, Mali, Mozambique, Somalia, Tanzania and Zambia, which have significant outstanding obligations to Russia. In Ethiopia's case, Russian debt amounts to 58 per cent of total debt, while for Angola it is 44 per cent and for Mozambique, 31 per cent. ■

US backs 'dynamic new Africa'

Just days before leaving Washington for the Denver summit, US President Bill Clinton unveiled his administration's new initiative, "Partnership for Economic Growth and Opportunity in Africa." Pledging to support "a dynamic new Africa" that is joining "the global march toward freedom and open markets," he announced on 18 June a series of measures under discussion with Congress to offer new trade and investment incentives.

These would include increasing the number of categories of African exports eligible for duty-free access to the US market from about 4,000 to 5,800, which could lead to a 50 per cent rise in the value of African exports to the US, Mr. Clinton estimated. In 1996, US purchases from sub-Saharan Africa reached \$15.2 bn, 20 per cent higher than the year before. In addition, the plan would use government guarantees through the Overseas Private Investment Corporation to encourage \$150 mn in new US private investments in Africa, as well as \$500 mn for investment in African infrastructure projects.

The President's initiative incorporates major portions of a Congressional bill which has backing from both parties in the legislature, and which will be finalized toward the end of the year. Unlike the President's proposal, however, the Congressional bill includes a provision to allow quota-free imports of African textiles and apparel, a move that would benefit such African exporters as Mauritius and Kenya, but which is opposed by US clothing and fabric manufacturers. Beyond the discussions between the administration and Congress, the initiative has prompted a wider public debate on US policy toward Africa. The Congressional Black Caucus, American Assembly, US-Africa Trade Policy Working Group and other organizations are pushing for broader action, including in such areas as conflict resolution and increased aid flows.